

Earnings Characteristics of Hired Farmworkers in 1996

The median weekly earnings for hired farmworkers were considerably lower than for all wage and salary workers in 1996. Hired farmworkers received median weekly earnings of \$250, about 60 percent of the \$415 per week received by all wage and salary workers (table 15).⁸ The wage gap remained unchanged from 1994 (appendix tables 1 and 2).

Between 1990 and 1996, median weekly earnings of hired farmworkers increased 25 percent, while the median weekly earnings of all wage and salary workers increased 15 percent. After adjusting for inflation, the median weekly earnings of hired farmworkers increased 4 percent between 1990 and 1994, and remained stable to 1996; and the median weekly earnings for all wage and salary workers decreased by 4 percent from 1990 to 1996. Service workers and hired farmworkers continued to rank among the lowest-paid laborers of 13 major occupational groups, with only private household service workers earning less in 1996 for full-time work (figure 5).

In addition to differences in weekly earnings between hired farmworkers and all wage and salary workers, weekly earnings between groups differed within the hired farm workforce (table 16). On average, hired farmworkers who were male, were older, were better educated, and worked in the West had higher weekly earnings. The median hours worked per week for all groups of workers was 40, except for females (35 hours) and workers younger than 20 (20 hours) (table 16). The lower median weekly hours for females and workers under 20 at least partially explains their lower median weekly earnings.

For most wage and salary workers, their earnings are a major source of family income. People who were primarily employed as hired farmworkers had lower annual family incomes in 1996 than did all wage and salary workers (table 17).⁹ Half of the hired farmworkers had family incomes of less than \$20,000. In comparison, only 26 percent of all wage and salary workers had family incomes less than \$20,000 and nearly 60 percent had family incomes of \$30,000 and above. The lower family income of hired farmworkers reflects lower earnings from both farm and non-farm work, as well as from other sources. The percent of hired farmworkers in each family income group did not change between 1994 and 1996.

Table 15—Weekly earnings of hired farmworkers and all wage and salary workers, 1996

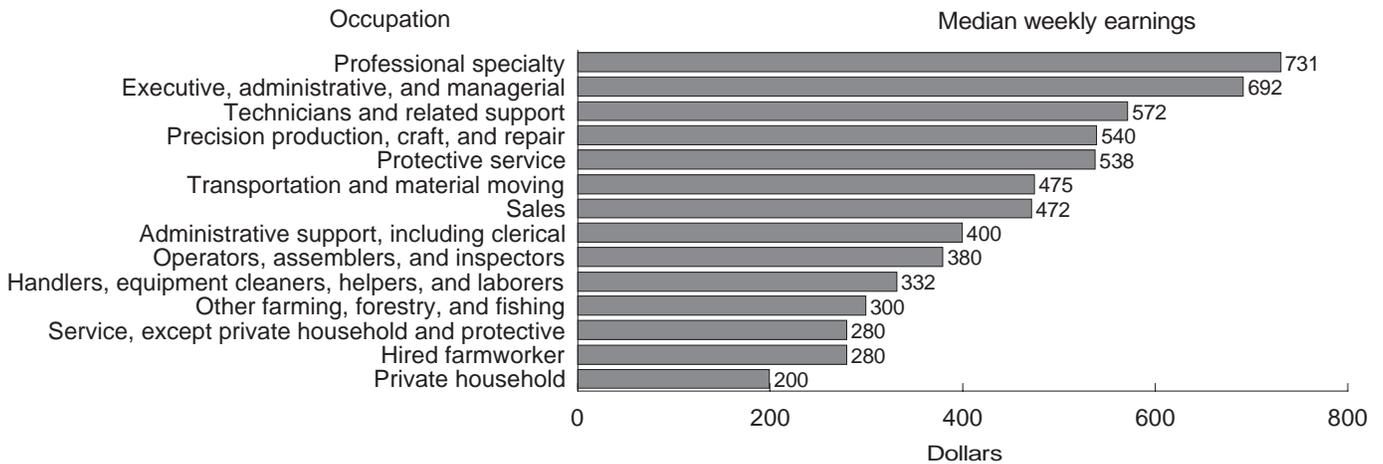
Characteristic	Annual averages	
	Hired farmworkers	All wage and salary workers
	<i>Thousands</i>	
Total	906	112,142
	<i>Percent</i>	
Weekly earnings:		
Less than \$100	14.2	6.2
\$100-\$199	17.4	10.8
\$200-\$299	32.6	15.6
\$300-\$399	15.2	14.1
\$400-\$499	10.5	12.5
\$500-\$599	3.8	9.6
\$600 or more	6.3	31.2
Median earnings	\$250	\$415

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

⁸ Data on earnings refer to the usual earnings received from the worker's farmwork job, before deductions, and include any overtime pay or commissions.

⁹ The CPS defines family income as the combined income of all family members during the last 12 months, including money from jobs; net income from businesses, farms, or rents; pensions, dividends, interest, or social security payments; and any other money income received by family members who are 15 years of age and older.

Figure 5

Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by occupation, 1996

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

Table 16—Median weekly earnings of hired farmworkers by demographic and employment characteristics, 1996

Characteristic	Hired farmworkers	Median weekly earnings	Characteristic	Hired farmworkers	Median weekly earnings
	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Dollars</i>		<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Dollars</i>
All hired farmworkers	906	250	Schooling completed (years): ²		
			0-4	119	250
Sex:			5-8	181	240
Male	763	250	9-11	219	200
Female	143	188	12	230	275
			13 or more	157	320
Racial/ethnic group:			Industry:		
White	534	248	Crop production	451	250
Hispanic	326	250	Livestock production	369	250
Black and other	46	— ¹	Other agricultural	86	225
Age: (years)			Farm production region:		
Less than 20	155	100	Northeast	65	225
20-24	98	225	Midwest	217	225
25-34	218	284	South	280	240
35-44	199	280	West	344	260
45-54	123	260			
55 and older	113	241			

¹ Dollar amounts not shown where base is less than \$50,000.

² Educational attainment levels, beginning January 1992, were revised to reflect degrees or diplomas received rather than years of school completed. Therefore, to be included under "12 years of education completed," a diploma, GED, or equivalent degree must have been granted.

Note: Data for 1994 and later years are not directly comparable with data for 1993 and earlier because of changes to survey design.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

Table 17—Family income of hired farmworkers and all wage and salary workers, 1996¹

Income	Hired farmworkers		All wage and salary workers	
	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Total	906	100.0	112,142	100.0
Less than \$10,000	235	25.9	16,814	15.0
\$10,000 to \$19,999	234	25.8	12,445	11.1
\$20,000 to \$29,999	158	17.4	15,860	14.1
\$30,000 to \$39,999	93	10.3	15,878	14.2
\$40,000 to \$49,999	65	7.2	12,689	11.3
\$50,000 or more	121	13.4	38,456	34.3

¹ Combined income of all family members during the last 12 months. Includes money from jobs; net income from businesses, farms, or rents; pensions, dividends, interest, and social security payments; and any other money income received by family members who are 15 years of age and older.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.